



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Buying Recycled

You are not really recycling unless you are buying recycled.

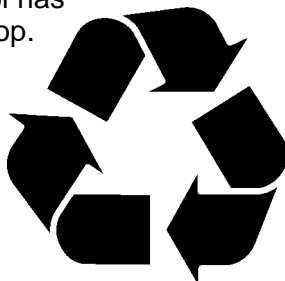
What's buying recycled?

Simple. Buying recycled is buying products that are made from recycled materials. Products made from recycled materials are called recycled-content products.

Recycling is a three-step process.

That's why the recycling symbol has three arrows that complete a loop.

The first step is collection – that's when you put your recyclables such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles and newspapers in the recycling bin or take them to a drop-off center.



The second step is manufacturing – that's when the recyclables are processed into raw materials to make new products. The third step is buying recycled. That's when you complete the recycling loop. If no one buys recycled-content products, recycling will not work.

Why buy recycled?

- **Buying recycled helps protect the environment and conserve natural resources.** Buying recycled reduces the need to drill and mine for natural resources and decreases the pollution that is created during the extraction of natural resources. In most cases, making products from recycled materials creates less air and water pollution than making products from newly extracted natural resources.
- **Buying recycled saves energy.** It usually takes less energy to make a product out of an old product than "new" natural resources. For

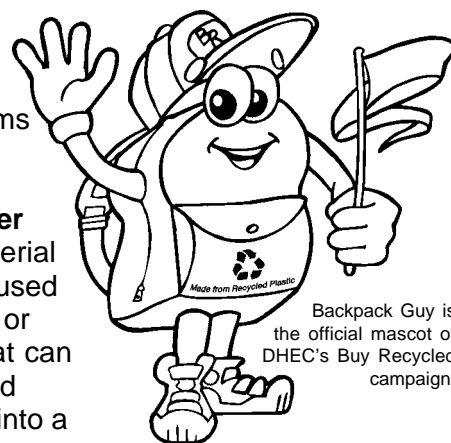
example, it takes about 95 percent less energy to make an aluminum can out of recycled aluminum than newly extracted natural resources.

- **Buying recycled saves landfill space and reduces the need to build landfills and incinerators.**
- **Buying recycled saves money and creates jobs.** The recycling process creates more jobs than landfills or incinerators and recycling often is the least expensive waste management option.

How can you tell if a product is a recycled-content product?

Read the label. Look for the chasing arrows. Look for these terms when shopping:

- **Post-consumer** material is material that has been used by consumers or businesses that can be recycled and manufactured into a new product;



Backpack Guy is the official mascot of DHEC's Buy Recycled campaign.

- **Pre-consumer** material is waste generated during the manufacturing process that is recovered and can be placed back into the process (trimmings and overruns, for example). Consumers do not recycle pre-consumer materials. Examples of this material include print overruns, obsolete inventories and scrap trimmings and cuttings; and
- **Recyclable** means the product can be recycled. The fact that a product can be recycled doesn't mean that your local program will accept it. Buy products that you know can be recycled in your community.

If the information is not on the label or unclear, call the manufacturer's toll-free number (usually provided on the label) and ask. Or you may ask the store manager when in doubt about the recycled content of a product. The store manager may not know, but it will raise his/her awareness of shoppers' interest in environmentally friendly products.

Products packaged in recycled or recyclable packaging do not necessarily contain recycled content. The product can be packaged in paper or plastic made from recycled material – which is a good start – but the most environmentally friendly packaging is none at all.

Buying recycled is easier than you think.

Today, most major national chains and nearly all of the smaller chains and independent retailers carry recycled-content products at competitive prices. In fact, there are more than 4,500 recycled-content products available and this number continues to grow.

Every time that you go to the grocery store, you likely are buying products in packages made from recycled materials. Almost all of the cereal, cracker and cake mix boxes are made of 100 percent recycled paperboard. Steel (food) cans and glass bottles also have high percentages of recycled materials. Paper towels and tissues often are made from recycled materials. Many trash bags are made from recycled plastic.

The grocery store isn't the only place to buy recycled. Many office supplies are made from recycled materials including legal pads, notepads, envelopes and office paper as well as remanufactured toner cartridges. Many school supplies are made from recycled materials including three-ring binders,

notebooks, notebook paper, pens and pencils, backpacks and lunch bags.

You may be buying recycled and not even know it. Newspapers are made from recycled paper. Some car parts (e.g., bumpers) are made from recycled plastic. Carpeting and clothing is made from recycled plastic soft drink bottles. Plastic lumber, park benches and many other products are made from recycled milk jugs. Gardening and yard supplies are made from recycled materials such as water hoses made from recycled tires as well as flowerpots, trash cans and lawn furniture made from recycled plastic.

Some people assume that products made from recycled materials are inferior in quality to entirely new products. Several studies have shown that this is not true. Each product must be judged individually and no evidence exists that recycled-content products are inferior to entirely new products. Recycled content products perform just as well, cost the same or less and are just as available as their non-recycled counterparts.

Buy recycled. The earth will be glad you did.

Learn more about it.

There are many and varied Web sites that provide information on buying recycled. Here are a few suggestions.

- www.americarecyclesday.org
- www.epa.gov/wastewise
- www.recyclenow.org (and click on buy recycled on the menu bar)
- www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/recyclenj
- www.dep.state.pa.us (and type in buy recycled as your keywords to search)



Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling
1-800-768-7348
www.scdhec.gov/recycle

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